

News Release

Final Designs Completed for Nature-Based Play Spaces in Crookston and Warren, Minn.

By Itollefs on Friday, September 9, 2011

Final concepts for nature-based play spaces for the cities of Crookston and Warren, Minn. have now been completed and approved. The children's play space for Crookston was designed for Castle Park (at right below), which is located off of Castle Street to the west of the Crookston hospital complex. The play space for Warren was designed for Island Park (at left below) located off of Warren's South Division Street.

A final design was prepared for each community. Both designs were a collaborative effort between the University of Minnesota Crookston and Twin Cities campuses. The nature-based play space final design concepts were created by Kristen Murray, U of M, Twin Cities landscape architecture graduate student, and Kristine Neu, U of M, Crookston environmental landscaping undergraduate. Funding for Murray's research assistant position was provided by the Community Assistantship Program (CAP) at the Center for Urban and Regional Affairs at the U of M Twin Cities campus. Both students were advised by Eric Castle, landscape architect and U of M, Crookston assistant professor of horticulture.

A nature-based play space is not the average playground. It looks more like woods, prairie, or garden. Unlike the open woods, the design has a border, so that parents know where their children are, and children can play freely in the space. The design incorporates plants and materials native to the area. The purpose of the design was to create a space that reconnects children to nature and improves overall health of children and families in the community.



The design process for both Castle and Island parks has been ongoing since early summer. The final design for Crookston was based on community feedback gathered at National Night Out on August 2 and input from the City of Crookston. Community feedback from Warren was gathered at the Marshall County Fair, and the City of Warren and Warren Jaycees also gave important input. Both communities will begin installation of their nature-based play spaces this fall. The students of the U of M Crookston landscape installation and maintenance class, lead by Castle, will be providing installation assistance at both sites. In Warren, the Jaycees will be providing volunteer assistance for the installation.



The nature-based play spaces in Crookston and Warren were two of several regional installations under the Children Discovering Nature in Northwest Minnesota Project. The project team also included Daniel Handeen and Virajita Singh, both research fellows at the U of M, Twin Cities Center for Sustainable Building Research (CSBR), and Linda Kingery, executive director of the Northwest Minnesota Sustainable Development Partnership (NWRSDP). Sarah Reese, Polk County Public Health Statewide Health Improvement Program (SHIP) Coordinator and Kirsten Fagerlund, SHIP staff, served as the liaison between the community of Crookston and the project team. Frances Tougas, North Valley SHIP coordinator, served a similar role in Warren. A portion of the financial support for the planning and implementation of each play space is being provided by a

grant received from the Otto Bremer Foundation and the U of M Office of Community Engagement for Health's Clinical and Translational Science Institute.

The project team is forming a core advisory committee for the nature-based play space in each community. Each committee would be comprised of a group of volunteers who will help make decisions, organize other volunteer efforts, and generally help create a vision for the play space into the future. If interested in being a part of the advisory committee in Crookston, community members are encouraged to contact Kirsten Fagerlund 218-281-3385 kfagerlund@pcphealth.org for more information. Community members of Warren should contact Gail Larson, North Valley Public Health Director, 218-745-5154 glarson@nvhc.net or Frances Tougas 218-745-5154 ftougas@nvhc.net.

The final designs are available for viewing the U of M Crookston website.

The Statewide Health Improvement Program (SHIP), an integral part of Minnesota's nation-leading 2008 health reform law, strives to help Minnesotans lead longer, healthier lives by preventing the chronic disease risk factors of tobacco use and exposure, poor nutrition and physical inactivity.

For more information, visit www.health.state.mn.us/healthreform/ship.

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2900 University Ave., Crookston, MN 56716
800-862-6466 | 218-281-6510 | umcinfo@umn.edu

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